

Army still needs women recruits

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FORT DIX, N.J.— "I am a drill sergeant. I do the job same as a male drill sergeant."

So says former New York schoolteacher Inez Paroly, one of 23 women drill sergeants out of a total of 440 here at Fort Dix.

She is fit, confident and commands the respect and support of most of the men — and women — recruits she trains.

But while her future in the Army looks extremely bright, if she chooses to stay in, U.S. Defense Department officials are expressing increasing concern about their failure to enlist enough women to meet their recruiting objectives in the Army and the Marine Corps.

The Army reached only 60 percent of its recruiting objective for women from Jan. 1 to March 30, according to the latest available figures. The goal was 5,210, whereas the number of women who "joined up" was 3,140. The Marine Corps failed to reach its recruiting goal for women over the same period by 11 percent. Only 520 out of the goal of 600 joined the Marines.

Conversely, both the Navy and the Air Force reached their first quarter goals for women recruits.

For the Army, the recent decline is part of a continuing trend.

Why? "I think the opportunities might be changing for women in the private sector," surmised one Army spokesman, Maj. Jeffrey Cook.

Another reason for the slide in women Army recruits, according to Cook, is that many women apparently "are not interested in some of the construction and artillery jobs" that the Army has been promoting.

In addition, he and other Army spokesmen said, there is the problem of "the lack of promotion opportunities" for women at a time when there are more women in the Army competing for promotions.

Meanwhile, in the Navy the recruiting of women obviously is being helped by the law that took effect

Connie Haney, is that "if you join the Navy or the Air Force, you're not going to be marching through the wilderness carrying a heavy pack." She also credited "the non-traditional aspects, such as going to sea and piloting a plane," as reasons for the greater allure of these two branches of service.

But long hours of plain old "field work" have not curbed the enthusiasm for the Army for women like Inez Paroly. And there is another thing she is mighty proud of:

"I like dealing with the new recruits and seeing them develop into good soldiers. You're really proud of them on graduation day (the end of the seven-week basic training session)."

Overall, all branches

of service have come a long way in their recruitment of women. As of July 31, 1978, the latest figures available, there were 131,000 women in the U.S. armed forces, up from about 39,000 at the end of 1969.

Army spokesmen here at Fort Dix praised their women recruits highly. On average, several spokesmen said, the women generally do better than the men on overall test scores following basic training.

The Pentagon wants to "deactivate" Fort Dix as a basic training center as part of a cost-cutting drive. But this will not faze Sgt. Paroly or the 22 other women drill sergeants here. After all, she's in the Army now — and she loves it.

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